THE DEBATE IN THE HOUSE OF COMMONS, ON THE MOTION OF THE RIGHT HON. WILLIAM PITT, FOR LEAVE TO BRING IN A BILL, TO AMEND THE REPRESENTATION OF THE PEOPLE OF ENGLAND IN PARLIAMENT, ON MONDAY, APRIL 18, 1785; WITH A CORRECT LIST OF THE DIVISION.

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TO THE PUBLIC.

THE meaſure of a propoſed Reform in the Repreſentation having engroſſed the public attention, it is conceived that an Authentic Detail of *the Debate on Mr. Pitt's Motion*, accompanied by a *Liſt of the Diviſion*, will be generally acceptable. The People without doors, as well as their Repreſentatives, entertain diverſity of opinions on the ſubject; the Debate, therefore, which comprehends every argument for and againſt the meaſure, muſt neceſſarily contain much uſeful information, and gratify laudable curioſity.

It is not the object of this Addreſs to inſiſt on either the expedience or the utility of a Parliamentary Reform; becauſe, a meaſure which hath divided in opinion the moſt illuminated characters of the age, ought neither to be ſlightly diſcuſſed, nor dogmatically decided on. There is one particular, however, to which the Public attention ſhould be directed: Previous to the Motion of Mr. Pitt, for leave to introduce a Bill which would have had for its object a Reform in the Repreſentation, not any Specific Plan, within the line of practicability, had been ſuggeſted: The Advocates for a Reform, in their zeal for the end, have either entirely forgotten the means; or, if they have condeſcended to ſuggeſt any thing like a mean, it has had too much the air of a Project, to have merited ſerious notice. Infinitely to the honour of Mr. Pitt, the Plan of Reform which

his Motion was deſigned to introduce, was the beſt which human wiſdom could have deviſed for the cure of any ſuppoſed defects in the preſent ſtate of the Repreſentation. It was the beſt poſſible meaſure, becauſe, in the preſent ſtate of things, perhaps it was the only practicable one; and it had this pre-eminent advantage, that it would have enhanced the conſequence, without augmenting the number of the Repreſentatives: The ancient foundations would have been ſtrengthened but not removed.

To thoſe, therefore, who intereſt themſelves in Political Concerns, the ſubſequent Debate is addreſſed; and, if after peruſal, it ſhall be decided that the weight of argument is in favour of a Parliamentary Reform, let it in juſtice, in candour, and in truth, be admitted, that preference ſhould be given to the Plan of Mr. Pitt: His meaſures are not like ſpeculative theorems; they are calculated for national utility; as his life is conſecrated for public ſervice by active virtue.

May 9, 1785.

PARLIAMENTARY REFORM.

MONDAY, APRIL 18, 1785.

THE *Chancellor of the Exchequer* roſe; and in a moſt maſterly and eloquent ſpeech (replete with beauties of oratory, force of argument, and correctneſs of reaſoning), that kept him up two hours and a half, and which was delivered to one of the fulleſt Houſes we ever ſaw aſſembled on any occaſion, proceeded to ſtate his Propoſition on the ſubject of a PARLIAMENTARY REFORM.

He began with obſerving, that if the queſtion to which he was to have the honour of calling their notice that day, had not ſo long engaged the attention of the Houſe, and of the Public, its magnitude and importance were ſo obvious, that it would have been ſufficient for him barely to have ſtated it, in order to have drawn to it that ſerious conſideration to which it ſtood ſo amply entitled. They had, he remarked, from their earlieſt infancy, imbibed a reverence for the Conſtitution of the Country; not a blind enthuſiaſm for the Conſtitution that would not let them ſee its few imperfections as well as its many excellent and glorious advantages, but a real regard for it, founded on good ſenſe, and a juſt eſtimation of the value and importance of the bleſſings derived under it, in conſequence of the ſhare the people had in their own government. This it was that conſtituted its chief excellence, ſince it made it the object of the general intereſt of the People, and rendered it peculiarly deſerving of their veneration and watchfulneſs. He ſaid, it had engaged his attention and regard, from the earlieſt period that he had been engaged in the politics of the country; and though the more he examined it, and the more he compared it with the Conſtitution of other countries, the more he was led to admire it, and to feel its ſuperiority over that of every country in Europe, yet, ſuperior as it was, he was obliged, upon conviction, to declare, that it was not altogether exempt from thoſe imperfections to which all human inſtitutions were more or leſs liable. Abſolute perfection, undoubtedly, was not to be expected; but it ought to be the endeavour of every man, who profeſſed or felt the leaſt love and reverence for that Conſtitution, ſo peculiarly

culiarly favourable to the liberties of all who lived under it, to carry it as near to perfection as from its nature it was capable of being rendered. Impreſſed with this idea, and ſincerely anxious for the ſecuring to the Public that Conſtitution to which they all ſtood ſo much indebted, he had at a former period offered his thoughts on the neceſſity of adopting ſome Propoſition or other, by way of alteration and reform, with a view to keeping up the popular weight in the balance of the Conſtitution, and of adapting it to the circumſtances of the times, and the peculiar ſituation of the moment. What he had at that time felt, with regard to the neceſſity for ſome alteration, had been ſince ſtrengthened and confirmed by each day's experience, at a period not unfruitful in political events. The ſubject had long engaged his mind, and the more he reflected upon it, the more he was convinced, an amendment on ſober and deliberate grounds was neceſſary to all the parts of the Conſtitution; the balancing of which exactly was the circumſtance which made that glory and happineſs Engliſhmen ſo much boaſted of, and foreigners ſo much admired, as the peculiar characteriſtic of the Britiſh Government. Formerly he had experienced the misfortune of failing in the different Propoſitions he had at different times urged, a failure that might eaſily be accounted for on a variety of grounds: he roſe, however, with different hopes of ſucceſs that day. With regard to that Houſe, it was entirely a new queſtion; nor was it only a new queſtion to the Houſe, but totally and completely a new queſtion. The vote of laſt year had not, he obſerved, been deciſive upon the queſtion that had been then propoſed; but the queſtion he ſhould have the honour to move that day, had never been rejected by any Houſe of Commons, nor ſtated in any public aſſembly. It was not, he ſaid, on general topics that the preſent queſtion ought to be decided, but upon its own particular merits; all he had to beg therefore, and that he did moſt earneſtly implore, was, that they would lay out of their minds all previous prejudices, and all opinions formerly entertained upon the general topics of Parliamentary Reform. On thoſe general topics, barely and nakedly ſtated, there could be no diverſity of opinion. That the Conſtitution of this country ought not to be lightly touched, or experimentally altered, merely upon ſpeculation and viſionary fancies, was an opinion that no man could contradict; as little was it to be denied, that if there were defects exiſting in the preſent ſtate of the Conſtitution, and which might be amended without riſk in the attempt, that they ought not to be deterred by imaginary and by looſe and general alarms, founded on ſuppoſed deſigns of dangerous innovation and experiment. Having ſtated theſe two undeniable poſitions, he broke out into a moſt animated eulogy on the Conſtitution, which he termed the nobleſt proof of human wiſdom, and the nobleſt ſpecimen of the favour of Providence, which every man muſt wiſh neither to endanger nor to tarniſh, but to ſecure to poſterity which all its advantages; and this, he ſaid, could only be done by recurring to its firſt principles; to reſtore it to which, was the object of his wiſh. He was happy, therefore, to ſay, that the outlines of the meaſure he ſhould propoſe

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gave the faireſt proſpect of ſucceſs. A Houſe of Commons truly repreſenting the People of England, was not a queſtion of exact repreſentation, or of the exact ſhare which every individual had in the Government of the country; but ſuch a repreſentation of the People in Parliament as ſhould cloſely connect the repreſentative body with all their conſtituents, and preſerve and ſecure the ſympathy of the Conſtitution. In effecting this, he did not expect abſolute and complete perfection; but it ought to be their endeavour to aim at obtaining the true end of the Conſtitution, and reſtoring its ſpirit more completely. It was their duty to look at that object ſeriouſly and earneſtly. With this view, let them turn their eyes back to the original principles of the Conſtitution, and they would ſee that its grand principle was, that the People ſhould have a ſhare of the Government, by a juſt repreſentation of them in Parliament. No man would diſagree to thoſe leading principles, nor would any man deny, that if the Conſtitution was to be framed anew, that the exiſting mode of repreſentation was not the moſt likely mode of inſuring the ſympathy of the Conſtitution, or of preſerving the intereſts of the People. Undoubtedly, as it ſtood at preſent, there were groſs and palpable defects in the mode of Repreſentation, which called loudly for Reform, but he was perfectly ſure that ſuch reform muſt be effected by ſome temperate and moderate alteration, gently adminiſtered. The great obſtacles to an amendment in the mode of Repreſentation, and the objections moſt inſiſted on by thoſe who were the profeſſed enemies of Reform, he took to be theſe: Firſt, an alteration in the number of the Members of that Houſe; ſecondly, any attempt to alter the mode of Repreſentation by diſfranchiſement of Boroughs as an Act of Power; and, thirdly, the general dread of innovation and experiment; and theſe three, he conſidered as including all the principal objections to an alteration in the mode of Repreſentation; but the latter he took to be the ſtrongeſt objection of all; the danger of innovating upon a fabric, built with ſo much wiſdom, and under which ſo many bleſſings had been experienced, having been laid moſt ſtreſs upon by the enemies of Reform, who had contended, that the making one amendment would unſettle the foundation of the Conſtitution, open a door to more amendments, and that there would be no end to alterations in future. [A cry of *Hear, Hear!*] The meaſure which he ſhould propoſe, had, he ſaid, a tendency to extinguiſh theſe objections, to give the Conſtitution an uniformity, to render future alterations wholly unneceſſary, and as far as in the nature of things was poſſible, to make our free Conſtitution immortal. This, he truſted, would appear, when he ſhould ſtate to the Houſe the detail of the Plan he had it in his contemplation to propoſe; it was only neceſſary for him then to declare, that he ſhould neither propoſe to alter the number of the Members, nor to diſfranchiſe by an Act of Power any one man in the country, nor to ſhake the foundation on which the Conſtitution ſtood, nor in fine to make any innovation whatever; but merely to recur to the original principles of the Conſtitution, and reſtore them. There was one leading principle in our Conſtitution, that had exiſted from the earlieſt periods, viz. that no

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intereſt in the country was unrepreſented. Upon referring to the Hiſtory of Parliaments and the Conſtitution, it would be found, that when Parliaments firſt began, the Repreſentation conſiſted of a Repreſentation of the Landed Intereſts, and a Repreſentation of certain Cities, Towns, and Boroughs of the Kingdom. The earlieſt period when Parliaments took any preciſe form, or became in any ſort reſpectable, was in the reign of Edward the Firſt, from which time to the reign of Charles the Second, there had been various additions and diminutions made. It was evident, therefore, that what he ſhould propoſe, ſo far from its being unprecedented, was warranted by precedents in all periods of our hiſtory. It had been an original principle, to lodge a diſcretion in the executive authority to ſummon to Parliament. That diſcretion now no longer exiſted; perhaps it had not been always well exerciſed, but it was in principle to be exerciſed on public grounds and for public objects. It remained for them to enquire into two circumſtances: Firſt, if it had been exerciſed otherwiſe than diſcreetly; and ſecondly, if alterations that had taken place ſince the period in which it had been exerciſed by the Crown, had made it inapplicable. Gentlemen had undoubtedly read, that of the Boroughs which uſed formerly to ſend Members to Parliament, *ſeventy-two* had been diſfranchiſed; that was to ſay, that the Crown had ceaſed to ſummon them at General Elections to return Burgeſſes to the Houſe of Commons. After the Reſtoration, *thirty-ſix* of theſe Boroughs petitioned Parliament to be reſtored to the exerciſe of their ancient franchiſe; their prayer was granted; and to this day they continued to enjoy it. But the other thirty-ſix not having preſented any Petition on the ſubject, had not recovered their loſt franchiſe. Various alterations had, he ſaid, been made at different times. At one time the Boroughs were added, but the Counties were nearly ſtationary. The laſt addition to them were the two Counties Palatine. In that manner they continued for a conſiderable time, till the Principality of Wales was added. Then came the Revolution, and ſince that, the whole kingdom of Scotland was added by the Act of Union. So that the preſent alteration was no new meaſure. Nay, ſo long ago as the reign of Edward the Firſt, 100 or more Boroughs were added. It was, therefore, he ſaid, juſt as fair to contend, that the preſent was not more the true Conſtitution of this Country, than that was, which exiſted in the time of Edward the Firſt, or at any other period ſubſequent to that reign. On this he raiſed much argument, in juſtification of coming forward with a Propoſition to apply a remedy to the defects in the Conſtitution; and ſaid, that poſſibly pride, lazineſs, or timidity, would not ſuppoſe that what they all admired could be found defective, and would in conſequence preſs an idea upon the Houſe that no alteration could take place without a breach in the fundamental principles of the Conſtitution. He ſhould contend, nevertheleſs, that there would be no breach in the Conſtitution, in diſcontinuing ſuch Boroughs as were unworthy, and indeed they had recently acted upon that idea, in the caſes of Shoreham and Cricklade. His wiſh on the preſent occaſion was, to lay down a principle in one inſtance that

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ſhould not be left to caprice or uncertainty, but ſhould be a conſtant, active principle, that ſhould maintain the Conſtitution the ſame at all periods; and he would boldly appeal to the Houſe, whether thoſe who argue for names and ſhadows, or for the ſubſtance and vital principles of the Conſtitution, did moſt argue in favour of the Conſtitution? He begged the patience of the Houſe to hear him ſtate a principle limited and final, complete and adapted to all times; a principle that would ſerve as a barrier againſt any indefinite and arbitrary alteration of the Conſtitution. Adapting the ſtate of Repreſentation to the circumſtances of the country, he contended, was not contrary to the principles of the Conſtitution; his intention therefore was ſo to model the Repreſentation of the People in future. The particular ſtatute that diſabled the King from altering the exiſting mode of Repreſentation, he ſtated to be the Act of Union, which fixed the reſpective number of Repreſentatives between the different parts of the country, and ſo they had remained ever ſince the ſtatute paſſed, although the circumſtances of the times were extremely varied. To give a full ſecurity to all the intereſts of the Country, was, he obſerved, the firſt principle of that part of the Conſtitution, and it was wiſely adapted to the purpoſe; but there were nevertheleſs ſeeds of future abuſe in the Conſtitution as it ſtood, without the poſſibility of a future remedy; but though this was undeniable, ſtill the enemies of Reform would not liſten to any poſitions to apply a remedy. Let us not, ſaid they, endeavour to improve nor to endanger the Conſtitution; neither let us try to make it better, for fear we ſhould make it worſe: generally view'd, Mr. Pitt declared, it might be a wiſe conſideration, but if deeper examined, it would be found to be far otherwiſe: if they could ſeparate the defects of the Conſtitution from its perfections, ſo as to take away the former without injury to the latter, it was undoubtedly their duty to do it; for however wiſe their anceſtors had been, they had ſtill left much for the virtue of their deſcendants. Let them then endeavour to give ſolidity, conſiſtency, and uniformity to the Conſtitution. Its merit had not ſhone forth at once, but had been the reſult of gradual improvements. The ſterling excellence of it had ſurvived the corruption of the moſt corrupt times, and kept alive the true flame of Liberty in the country. In conſequence of the alterations that had been at different times made in the Conſtitution, theſe eſſential advantages had been obtained, viz. that Parliament ſhould be aſſembled as often as the exigencies of the country ſhould require, and that Parliament ſhould meet every year, to hear and redreſs the grievances of the People, before they voted Supplies. To obtain theſe, there had been long ſtruggles, and many difficulties; but they had ſubſtituted nothing for the diſcretion formerly veſted in the Crown, but which ſince the Act of Union, was no longer exiſting; in conſequence of which, all the miſchiefs they had experienced, had happened. The good ſenſe and the reaſon of the ſubject had been early apparent. Let them look to James I. a Prince who mounted the Throne with high ideas of the Prerogative, and who was not to be ſuſpected of being too partial to the Liberties of the Subject. Yet even to that Prince did the danger of ſummoning a Parliament, at the diſcretion of the Crown, appear to

be ſo unfit to continue, that meaſures were taken reſpecting it, though they were not afterwards carried fully into effect. Again, in the time of the Protectorate, Lord Clarendon, the great hiſtorian of thoſe days, ſtated, that the number of Knights was propoſed to be made greater, and the number of Burgeſſes ſmaller. He alſo ſpoke of the reign of Charles the Firſt, and ſaid, the principles of Freedom gave riſe to the Oppoſition againſt that Monarch; that the Oppoſition degenerated firſt into licentiouſneſs and next into tyranny, a natural conſequence. He did not quote from theſe reigns as reigns affording any authority or precedent, but as an illuſtration of his principle of correcting the Conſtitution, and with a view to ſhew that the ſeeds of ſome of the moſt eſſential benefits and advantages this country enjoyed, had been ſown in the worſt of times. The defects of our Conſtitution had, he ſaid, exiſted from its infancy; he wiſhed therefore to provide againſt a return of the miſchiefs thoſe defects had produced, and gradually to bring together all the perfection the caſe was capable of.

Mr. Pitt at length proceeded to ſtate the outline of his Plan, which latter he ſaid conſiſted of two parts; the firſt the moſt preſſing and moſt immediate; the ſecond (without the introduction of any new principle) to rectify it hereafter. The Houſe he meant to propoſe ſhould conſiſt as it did then, of 558 Members, but to have a larger number of Repreſentatives for the more populous and opulent diſtricts, as a general principle. The firſt feature of the Bill was to provide for a tranſfer of about ſeventy, or ſeventy-two Repreſentatives from Boroughs, which either have fallen to decay, or are like to do ſo; and the criterion to decide by ſhould be the number of houſes, which would be extremely eaſy; this addition to be diſtributed among the different Counties and the metropolis, as they ſtood in need of them; the number to be limited by the nature of the thing, and not aſcertained by any arbitrary line. If too many were added to Counties, he obſerved that they would be liable to two objections, which were theſe: 1. It might be objected, that too many would be choſen for each: or, 2. That if Counties were ſubdivided, there would be too few Electors to chooſe the Members. The thirty-ſix Boroughs were to be diſfranchiſed on their own voluntary application to be diſfranchiſed, two ways, either as an act of power, or to make it their own act, by ſome compenſation offered to them.

He next opened the ſecond head of the firſt part of his Plan, by ſtating that the only method of carrying this into execution, was by providing a fund for the purpoſe of giving to the owners and holders of ſuch Boroughs as ſhould apply to be diſfranchiſed, a compenſation for their property. Even conſidering the burthens that the People already laboured under, he declared he ſhould not think it difficult to find a fund for this purpoſe, as the ſituation of the country was leſs gloomy than many men imagined. He meant, he ſaid, not to have the Boroughs eſtimated, but appretiated; for as it was well known the holders of them had found a way to convert them into a ſource of profit, as well as the other parts of their eſtate, he might venture, without any affectation of extra-

extraordinary delicacy, to ſpeak out at once upon the ſubject. This being a fact, and the repreſentations of the Boroughs in queſtion not being exerciſed as a truſt, they certainly ought not to be ſuffered to remain in the hands of their preſent owners any longer. He ſtated farther, that the compenſation was to be taken without diſcontent or diſſatisfaction, by acquieſcence and conſent, and not by force and compulſion. Such he ſaid was the mode by which he hoped to attain his object. He ſpoke of the laws that tend to correct the criminal laws againſt bribery and corruption. The Boroughs, he ſaid, might be transferred, in fact, as any other eſtate, without bribery or immorality; declaring he was ready to throw a veil over the fact, if we could be free from the inconvenience. He ſpoke of the different burgage tenures, on a leſs ſcale, poſſeſſed between an individual and a ſpecies of Electors in ſhares, and ſaid there was a reaſonable probability that there might be a compenſation, that it might behove the country to offer, which might be accepted; but the rule ſhould be general, and the ſame condition given to one ſort as another: all the inconſiderable Boroughs to be put on a footing. The manner of carrying this plan into execution, he ſtated as follows: If a majority of Electors ſhould offer to relinquiſh, the natural queſtion that would ariſe would be, who are the Electors? Let that queſtion be referred to the Committee ſworn under Mr. Grenville's Bill to try the queſtion of right to a ſeat. He contended that there ought to be no diſcretion in the ſum to be offered, but then it ought not to be exactly equal to each Borough-holder, becauſe there were different claſſes of Borough-holders; ſome held in perpetuity, others had only a life intereſt in a Borough, and others again were in expectancy of a reverſion. The number of Boroughs he ſtated that would be to purchaſe, were thirty-ſix; he meant therefore to ſet apart the money for each, to let it accumulate at compound intereſt. Thus, if the ſum ſet apart was not a ſufficient compenſation, it would become one by laying by, as it would increaſe till it became *irreſiſtible*.

The above, he ſaid, was the firſt part of the Plan, by which much was gained by the Conſtitution of the country. Another part he would ſtate, to ſhew the extent of the ſcheme, and to prove it to be as comprehenſive and as complete as poſſible. When all that ought to be added to Counties were added, the number muſt either be added to the number of the whole Houſe, or transferred from thoſe Boroughs which are ſtill ſmall and inconſiderable (within a certain ſize) to Cities and great Towns, who from time to time ſhall beſt deſerve them. He ſaid further, as the ſources of Repreſentation are, firſt, to give to Counties which have not their ſhare; ſecondly, to allot to the Towns and Cities, which ſhall be conſiderable enough, and deſirous of receiving more, or who from their population ſhall be beſt entitled to it; and this rule to remain to operate, *in perpetuo*, as Boroughs fell into decay. This ſhewed at once the extent of the ſyſtem; and would, he flattered himſelf, remove the alarms that prevailed upon the ſubject, by eſtabliſhing a conſiſtent and complete ſyſtem, and a final one, as far as the principle goes. There was an end therefore

to the objection, that this would lead to danger and to perpetual alteration; on the contrary, it would lay that important queſtion at reſt; a point ſo deſirable, that he hoped it would induce the Houſe to go the length, at leaſt, of conſidering the Bill he ſhould have the honour to bring in, in caſe he ſhould have the good-fortune to be permitted to bring one in. And he truſted, the Houſe would conſider it with partiality, as a matter which the People of England had called for at different periods, ſometimes more and ſometimes leſs.

Having thus gone through the two parts of the Bill, Mr. Pitt proceeded to ſtate, and to anſwer the probable objections that would be made againſt his Propoſition; and firſt, he mentioned the expence it would load the Public with. If the meaſure was a good one, and it was agreed to be an important one, the money, in his mind, that it would coſt, would be well applied. It would give ſecurity to the Conſtitution, to the Liberties of the Country, the deareſt Rights of the People at large, and to their freedom, which was truly invaluable. Let them be œconomical (and they could not be too much ſo) in ſome other inſtance, but in carrying the Propoſitions he had made into execution, they would prevent prodigality; and were they to ſpend millions upon ſuch an object, and had they done ſo at an earlier period of their hiſtory, and been thereby enabled to have prevented the calamities and diſgraces that had befallen the country, what cauſe would there not have been for ſolid ſatisfaction and triumphant exultation? Here Mr. Pitt ſeemed to point at the American war and its conſequences; after which he ſaid, the progreſs of the Plan would be gradual, as he did not intend it to take place inſtantly in its full extent, that it ſhould not affect the ſeat of any perſon choſen for the whole Parliament. If the plan were adopted in that Seſſion, there would be no man but who ought to be ſatisfied. And in the interim till it took effect, the People of England would have the happineſs of being repreſented by the preſent Houſe of Commons, choſen as that Houſe had been by the free voice of the People. On chooſing the next Parliament, if any Borough were, after the Parliament had begun buſineſs, to petition to be diſfranchiſed, the ſitting Member ſhould vacate his ſeat. There was, Mr. Pitt ſaid, another point that he had accidentally omitted in the earlier part of his ſpeech, and that was, his intention in Counties to increaſe the number of the Electors as well as the number elected; but what he meant to do in this reſpect, was extremely ſimple, and totally diſtinct from the idea of univerſal repreſentation; he meant merely that another ſpecies of perſons of property, beſides freeholders, ſhould alſo have votes for the County; he alluded to copyholders, who were in moſt reſpects in the ſame ſituation as freeholders themſelves. Having ſtated this, he took a general view of the principle of the meaſure. He ſaid it was practicable and beneficial; that it was a principle deeply rooted in this country; that the Repreſentation as it ſtood at preſent, was inadequate, and that ſome amendments were neceſſary; that they had leiſure, and a

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fair opportunity for a full diſcuſſion of ſo important a matter then; but that if it ſhould have come before, when in a moment of difficulty and diſtreſs, it would have been impoſſible to have done juſtice to it; that the imperfections in the ſtate of the Repreſentation weakened the confidence the People had in the Repreſentative Body, and the love they ought at all times to be encouraged to entertain for the Conſtitution. It was to that confidence the country owed all her former ſtrength, proſperity, and ſplendour. It was true, that the country had proſpered as the Repreſentation ſtood at preſent, but if we had proſpered, we had alſo ſuffered; bitterly and grievouſly ſuffered; ſuffered for the want of this amendment, and by means of Parliaments having a boundleſs and unlimited confidence in a Miniſter, and continuing to entertain that confidence after the Miniſter had loſt the confidence of the country. The Repreſentatives had a common intereſt with their conſtituents, the People of England; it became therefore the duty of every man in that Houſe to cement the union, and ſtrengthen the connexion between the people and the popular branch of the Legiſlature. The alterations, he repeated it, would be better made in the moment of peace and of reflection, than in a moment of turbulence and of public misfortune; he hoped therefore that the Houſe, by its conduct that day, would afford permanent and laſting ſatisfaction to the friends of the meaſure of Reform. The fixed and ſteady principle of the Propoſition would lead the Houſe no farther; if therefore there were dangerous and alarming plans of Reform in the contemplation of any wild and viſionary ſpeculators, the beſt way to put an end to the dread of any danger likely to ariſe from ſuch raſh and ill-digeſted innovations, would be to adopt the motion he was juſt about to offer to the conſideration of the Houſe. Mr. Pitt concluded with declaring that he ſhould feel a degree of ſatisfaction, which no other meaſure could ever afford him in his life, if he ſhould be the humble inſtrument of ſecuring by that regulation the deareſt intereſts, and the future liberty and happineſs of the People of England. He then moved,

"That leave be given to bring in a Bill, to amend the Repreſentation of the People of England, in Parliament."

Mr. *Duncombe* roſe to ſecond the Motion. He ſaid, that if, after the ſenſe of the People on the ſubject of Reform had been ſo clearly aſcertained, the Miniſter had not come forward and propoſed ſome meaſure upon the ſubject, he muſt have expected but a ſmall ſhare, in future, of that grace and confidence at the hands of the conſtituent body, which was in fact a Miniſter's beſt ſupport. The manner in which the Right Honourable Gentleman had opened his Propoſitions, and the Propoſitions themſelves, Mr. Duncombe ſaid, did him the higheſt credit. They met with his entire approbation, and ſhould have his hearty ſupport.

The Motion having been read,

Mr. *Powys* roſe, and in a very able ſpeech, ſtated his objections to the Propoſitions. The ſubject matter of the Motion had now, he ſaid, been brought forward in a more formidable manner than ever. It was no longer the ſuggeſtion of a private individual, but it had

had been brought forward by the Miniſter as a meaſure of Government. He complimented the Chancellor of the Exchequer on the abilities and eloquence he had diſplayed in the funeral oration he had delivered on the Conſtitution of his country, in order to render which immortal, he had put an end to its exiſtence. He ſaid it was very extraordinary, that the Right Honourable Gentleman was in ſuch haſte to apply a remedy before he had proceeded even to inquire, much leſs attempted to prove, that any evil exiſted. He begged leave to call the attention of the Houſe to the ſubject and ſentiments of the ſeveral Petitions that had been preſented, praying for an alteration in the ſtate of Repreſentation. He then read from the Votes, extracts from the ſeveral Petitions from Nottingham, Norwich, York, &c. and commented upon each. The Petition from Nottingham, he ſaid, affected to ſpeak in the name of a vaſt deſcription of perſons, by whom it had not been ſigned. He ſhould have been glad to have known of what the Petitioners had to complain. The Petition appeared to be ſo worded, that the object of it could not be obtained by a Reform of Parliament, but by a Reform of the manners of the age; for it was clearly to that the Petition went. The Norwich Petition was ſigned by no more than 1200 perſons, who appeared in this very ſingular light—that at the time they were aſſerting, that a free Conſtitution could not be enjoyed, until the Houſe of Commons ſhould have been reformed, they were paying the higheſt compliments to the preſent Houſe, repoſing the greateſt confidence in its wiſdom and patriotiſm; and declaring, that it ſpoke the ſenſe of the People at large. If all this was true, he ſhould be glad to know, from what the Petitioners could deduce the neceſſity of a Reform. The Yorkſhire Petition came unqueſtionably from a great and reſpectable County: but did the plan opened by the Right Honourable Gentleman anſwer the wiſhes and expectations of that County? He believed it did not; and that he would acquire no addition by it to his reputation or popularity. The Right Honourable Gentleman had aſſumed it as a fact, that Members for decayed Boroughs muſt have ſeparate intereſts from the People; but he was of opinion that the aſſumption was unfounded—He remembered that a Noble Lord, nearly related to the Right Hon. Gentleman, (Mr. T. Pitt, now Lord Camelford) had once made a motion in that Houſe, which did him infinite honour; which would have done honour to the Repreſentative of the firſt county in the kingdom. It was—"That this Houſe is *bound* to liſten to the Petitions of the People." This ſurely did not make him appear to be a man who had ſeparate intereſts from them; and yet, he was not, at the time he made that motion, the Repreſentative of a County, or a great Town; he was Member for Old Sarum, one of thoſe Boroughs doomed, by the Right Hon. Gentleman's plan, to be diſfranchiſed. He obſerved, that if the franchiſe of decayed Boroughs was given up, the Right Honourable Gentleman ought to ſet the example to the reſt of the nation, by the ſacrificing at the ſhrine of Reform the Ordnance, Treaſury, and Admiralty Boroughs. He did not conceive that there could be any neceſſity for reforming the Repreſentation of the People at preſent, unleſs it appeared that the Houſe

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of Commons, according to its preſent Conſtitution, is utterly incapable of ſpeaking the ſenſe of the People; but if any Member ſhould venture to aſſert that it really was incapable of ſpeaking the ſenſe of the Nation, he would refer him to the ſpeech of his Majeſty at the opening of the preſent Parliament, in which the Miniſter boaſted that the ſenſe of the People had been taken by the new Election; and the Right Honourable Gentleman had frequently boaſted ſince, that the voice of this Parliament was the voice of the People.—With what degree of decency then could the Right Honourable Gentleman ſay, in the face of ſo popular a Parliament, that the Houſe of Commons cannot, unleſs reformed, convey the ſenſe of the Nation? A late Adminiſtration, it might perhaps be ſaid, had been an Adminiſtration of corruption; and upon its ruins was raiſed an adminiſtration of *opinion*; and a good opinion unqueſtionably muſt be entertained of it, when it was known that it did not entertain or cheriſh any one who had been formerly an agent of corruption.—(At this ironical expreſſion there was a loud roar of *Hear!*)—He ſaid he felt himſelf inclined by curioſity to conſent that the Right Honourable Gentleman ſhould have leave to bring in his Bill; but when he conſidered the fatal conſequences it might produce, his curioſity was checked; and he was reſolved to give a flat and direct negative to the motion. There were other Reformers abroad, who, though they would undoubtedly vote againſt the different parts of this Plan, would nevertheleſs conſent to the introduction of a Bill of Reform; it would be a great point gained by them; it would be then the ſtanding place, the *fulcrum*, which alone was wanting to enable them to toſs the Parliament about, as Archimedes would have done the world. In order, therefore, as far as in him lay, to nip their expectations in the bud; in order to ſet this queſtion of Reform finally at reſt, he would not have recourſe to a motion for the order of the day, a previous queſtion, or adjournment; he would not attempt to get rid of the motion by a ſide wind, but would moſt heartily give it a direct negative.

Lord *North* ſaid, the Honourable Gentleman had given him comfort by what he had ſaid in the concluſion of his ſpeech, viz. that he would not agree to any conceſſion, but would give the motion his direct negative. Undoubtedly that was the ſort of treatment the motion ought to receive, and it was the line of treatment he ſhould himſelf adopt reſpecting it. Curioſity, he ſaid, had in more inſtances than one greatly miſled mankind; and he ſhould have thought the Honourable Gentleman had given way to a moſt fatal curioſity, if he had raſhly and unadviſedly countenanced for a moment a direct attack upon the Britiſh Conſtitution, a Conſtitution, the work of infinite wiſdom, the ſource of many bleſſings, much happineſs, much glory; a Conſtitution richly deſerving of that warm praiſe which the Right Honourable Gentleman had beſtowed on it, in far better words than he was maſter of, and with a brilliancy and glow of eloquence that would have adorned the meaneſt ſubject of panegyrick, but which was was well employed in decorating

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and deſcribing the moſt beautiful fabric that, perhaps, had ever exiſted from the beginning of time. He never would give his conſent to any attempt to tamper with ſuch a fabric, unleſs a very ſtrong caſe could be made out to prove it ſtood in need of ſome repair. That caſe had not yet been made out, neither had any the ſmalleſt ſhadow of proof been yet given that it required any aſſiſtance whatever. Of an exiſting evil he knew nothing; the bleſſings that had been derived under the Conſtitution he knew well; they all knew them, they ſtood recorded in the hiſtoric annals of the country; they had been felt for ages; they were felt at that moment. The Right Honourable Gentleman had talked of pride, of lazineſs, of timidity; perhaps, out of the abundance of his civility, he meant to apply thoſe words to him. Was it fair, that becauſe he happened to differ from the Right Honourable Gentleman upon a great and an important ſubject, a ſubject in which they were all deeply and perſonally intereſted, in which the country itſelf, and the Conſtitution that they were all ſo ready to extol, were deeply intereſted, becauſe he happened to differ from the Right Honourable Gentleman upon a queſtion of that magnitude, he was to be attacked and treated with a degree of harſhneſs which was not, which could not be merited by any Member of that Aſſembly; was it pride, when he was called upon to vote in ſupport of a requiſition to be permitted to tamper with the Conſtitution, to ſay, ſhew me firſt the neceſſity? Was it lazineſs, to ſay, when it is ſtated that a remedy is wanting, to inſiſt on having the evil ſtated to which that remedy is to be applied? Was it timidity, when called upon to unſettle the foundation of that glorious fabric, the work of his anceſtors, to deſire to pauſe, before he conſented, and to enquire for why he ſhould conſent to undo it? His Lordſhip then took notice of the manner in which the Chancellor of the Exchequer had glanced at the American war. As that was not the ſubject of the day, and bore no ſort of relation to the queſtion then under conſideration, his Lordſhip ſaid he would not at that time go into any diſcuſſion of it; he would only repeat what he had often ſaid before, viz. that whenever that queſtion was properly brought forward, he was ready to meet it, conſcious, that though we had been unfortunate in the war, though the war had been calamitous to the country, no blame was aſcribeable to him on that account; the war was the war of the People, began at their inſtance, and at the inſtance of that Houſe. Thoſe were facts ſo undeniably true, that he wondered how any man was bold enough, in the face of thoſe who were then ſitting in the Houſe, and knew the facts that he had ſtated ſo well, to ſtart a doubt of them. Having ſaid this, his Lordſhip returned to the immediate ſubject of the day, which he treated with great ſeverity. He ſaid, on a former occaſion, when the Honourable Gentleman behind him had riſen to reprobate the idea of tampering with the Conſtitution, (for that was the fourth, if not the fifth time, that it had been under diſcuſſion;) when the worthy Member for Northamptonſhire (Mr. Powys) had deſired to have the Birmingham Petition read, thoſe who were friends of what they called Reform, but what he ſhould call Ruin, had ſent a paragraph to the newſpapers, ſtating that the Noble

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Lord in the blue ribband would not have long to boaſt of there being no Petitions, for there would ſoon be Petitions enough on the table. How happened it, ſaid his Lordſhip, that there is no Petition from Birmingham now, nor in the whole more than eight Petitions? The Right Honourable Gentleman, it was true, had ſaid in his ſpeech, that a Reform had been called for by the People, ſometimes more, and ſometimes leſs. So aware was the Right Honourable Gentleman, that the ſmall number of Petitions that had been preſented, neceſſarily created an argument againſt the Motion, that he had thought it prudent to endeavour to weaken the force of that argument, which he foreſaw would be urged, by ſaying, with an indifferent air, that the Reform had been called for by the People, ſometimes more and ſometimes leſs. What was he to underſtand from that obſervation? Was he to take it as a proof, that the People did really call for a Reform at that time? Was he ſo far to accommodate what they ſaw, and what they did not ſee, and to take both as a proof that the People of England wiſhed for a Reform? The Petitioners who had ſubſcribed the Petitions that were on the table, certainly did wiſh for a Reform; and if he were to admit, that thoſe who had not petitioned, equally wiſhed for a Reform, it was going a good way to meet their wiſhes, becauſe in admitting ſo much, they ſpoke by their preſence and by their abſence; by their prayers, and by their ſilence. Well might he ſay with the man in the Rehearſal:

What horrid ſounds of *ſilence* doth aſſail mine ear?

Having ſported with this idea, his Lordſhip ſaid, the people of Birmingham were wiſer than to call for any innovation in the Conſtitution. As little did he believe, the majority of the People in any part of the kingdom wiſhed for a Reform. He knew there had been a meeting ſummoned in the firſt city in the empire, (London) by ſpecial notice, for the expreſs purpoſe of inſtructing their Repreſentatives; and there he was informed, though the meeting and the buſineſs of it had been publicly announced and was of general notoriety, only 300 attended. When they were about to inſtruct one of their Repreſentatives, he declared his readineſs to obey his conſtituents; but expreſſed a wiſh, that he had ſeen more of them preſent at the meeting, becauſe he felt ſome difficulty in proceeding to act, as 300 inſtructed him, when, by the abſence of 8000 of his conſtituents, he was induced to imagine, that they did not very highly approve of the buſineſs they were convened upon. His Lordſhip ſaid, he was aware that one Gentleman preſent at the meeting had ſaid, in anſwer to what he had juſt ſtated, that the 8000 who were abſent, meant by that very circumſtance to ſignify their concurrence in any reſolution the 300 ſhould come to. This was, his Lordſhip ſaid, rather a curious ſort of logic, as he believed the Houſe would readily agree; but it was not a whit more extraordinary, than the idea that the People of England were to be ſuppoſed to wiſh really for an alteration in the ſtate of Parliamentary Repreſentation,

when they did not aſk for it. He reminded the Houſe of the Circular Letters of Mr. Wyvill; and of the great pains that had been taken to ſtir the queſtion in all parts of the kingdom. If, therefore, the people in general really deſired any alteration, they would have petitioned in great numbers from moſt of the different towns for it. His Lordſhip entered into all the ancient Hiſtory of Parliaments; and ſtated accurately the degrees and gradations Parliament had paſſed through from their firſt inſtitution, accounting rationally for the diſcretion of the Crown, that had been formerly exerciſed, by ſtating that originally the chiefs in fee, who held of the Crown, and were liable to ſuit and ſervice, were ſummoned; and being at the time chief tenants of the Crown, were at the will of the Crown aſſembled either wholly or partially. Afterwards, when they had divided their lands, property became more diſperſed, and money grew more ſcarce; in conſequence of which, the leſſer Barons were ſpared, on account of their inability to bear the expence of parliamentary attendance. Again, at a ſubſequent period, another change was made: after that, another, and, by degrees, Parliament was ſettled on its preſent footing, where, his Lordſhip ſaid, he heartily hoped it would long be ſuffered to remain, and not be diſturbed on account of any chimeras that entertained the brains of viſionaries and ſpeculatiſts, who were not, he verily believed, aware of the ſerious miſchiefs they had employed themſelves about. All the idea of the neceſſity of a Reform, he was perſuaded, was the mere vapour of a dream, the ſhadow of a ſhade, empty whim and fanciful nothing, from which the Right Honourable Gentleman was endavouring to conjure up ſomething; but he relied on the good-ſenſe and ſound reaſon of the majority, truſting that they would break the ſpell, and prevent the magicians from practiſing on a ſubject that ought to be held ſacred. His Lordſhip ſaid, even admitting, for the ſake of argument, and he ſhould not wiſh to be thought ſerious in admitting for a moment that any alteration was actually neceſſary; yet he ſhould contend that the alteration propoſed was not adapted to the feigned evil. He begged to know, where there exiſted in Europe, or on the face of the globe, a People ſo happy as thoſe under the Britiſh Conſtitution? Where was there a People ſo fully in poſſeſſion of their Rights and Liberties? The fact was undeniable; what matter it then, whether perſons who ſat in that Houſe, the guardians of the Public Freedom, ſat by virtue of having been elected for a burgage tenure, a Borough, or a County? While the People's rights were ſecure, and their liberties ſafe, why was it neceſſary to go into a minute inquiry how they came to be ſecure and ſafe? The means were provided by our anceſtors, and had been ſanctioned by experience, the teſt of truth. His Lordſhip ſaid, the Right Honourable Gentleman, like a quack, was deſirous of having the doſe ſwallowed, whether the patient had any diſeaſe or not; and, like a true empiric, would inſiſt upon it that his pill was ſpecific, and would cure patients in all caſes and under all circumſtances. The ſubject was too ſerious to be ludicrous upon; but he would juſt ſtate, that the Right Honourable Gentleman reminded him of the Mock

Doctor

Doctor in Moliere's farce. He ſaid, he ſuppoſed the Speaker had either ſeen or read the book, and would recollect, that a man's daughter is ſuppoſed to be *dumb*, and he ſends for a phyſician to cure her. The Doctor comes, and ſoon reſtores the girl to the uſe of her tongue, which ſhe exerciſes ſo fluently, that the father offers him another fee to make her dumb again; when the Doctor replies, "he can't do that, but if he pleaſes, he'll undertake to make him *deaf*." Having ſet the Houſe in a roar, his Lordſhip again returned to argument; and ſaid, it was of late become a cuſtom, to lay hold of a ſtrong epithet, and apply it to any particular phraſe that was meant to be made uſe of to deceive and delude the People. Thus he had heard of the Spirit of Liberty, the Spirit of Freedom, and the Spirit of the Conſtitution: what was meant by the latter, as applied at popular meetings, he knew not, nor he did believe thoſe who uſed it, knew themſelves. For his part, he had always conceived that the Spirit of the Conſtitution was to be looked for, and found, in the common law of the land, and in the practice and uſage of Parliament. It was enough, in his opinion, for the People to be happy and free. With regard to the idea of the country gentlemen making a conſiderable part of that Houſe, the idea was a very juſt one: he was ready to admit, the bulk and weight of that Houſe ought always to be in the hands of the country gentlemen, who were, undoubtedly, the beſt and moſt reſpectable objects of the confidence of the People. Their diſintereſtedneſs, their virtue, their public ſpirit, he admired. They were undoubtedly fitted by their education and their ſituation in life more peculiarly for Members of Parliament, than almoſt any other deſcription of men in the kingdom; beſides, they had the greateſt ſtake in the country after all, and were the moſt deeply intereſted in its welfare; becauſe, let what would happen, men of buſineſs and manufacturers could go and get their living elſewhere, but a country gentleman could not quit his native country becauſe he could not carry his eſtate away with him. But for God's ſake, had not the country gentlemen their ſhare in the repreſentative body at preſent? Was it merely the repreſentatives of counties that were now country gentlemen? Let any man look round the Houſe at that moment, and then let him ſay whether he did not ſee many very reſpectable characters, who were country gentlemen, Repreſentatives of large Boroughs? His Lordſhip ended with an emphatic wiſh, that the friends of the Conſtitution would feel as one man, and arouſe at the danger it would be put in, if the preſent Motion were carried; he therefore hoped, they ſhould have the triumph of carrying it in the negative; for if a door were once opened to innovation and experiment, there was no knowing to what extent it might be carried. He gave the Right Honourable Gentleman full credit for not intending, if he ſhould prove ſo ſucceſsful as to carry the preſent Motion, to go any farther; but the Right Honourable Gentleman could only anſwer for himſelf. Other Miniſters might make what the Right Honourable Gentleman had done, a plea for doing ſomething more; and again, other Miniſters after them, till there would be no end to innovation and experiment.

Mr. *Wilberforce* remarked, that the dread of innovation ſeemed ſo much to prevail in the minds of certain perſons, that in order to avoid it, they took care to reject even any new ground of argument; and the Houſe was now entertained with a repetition of the ſame obſervations and the ſame jokes which they had ſo often heard before on ſimilar occaſions. There was, he ſaid, one peculiar excellence in the Plan now ſubmitted by his Right Honourable Friend, which no attempt had been yet made to diſpute, and which indeed was liable to no objection. This was that ſyſtem of gradual and progreſſive improvement which muſt proceed to rectify and meliorate the ſtate of repreſentation, according as thoſe circumſtances ſhould ariſe, on which it was calculated to operate.—It would alſo tend, in his opinion, to diminiſh the progreſs of party and coheſion in this country, from which, he was well convinced, our greateſt misfortunes aroſe. There were men and parties in this country, which derive moſt of their power and influence from theſe burgage tenures, againſt which the operations of this Bill were to be directed. By deſtroying them the freedom of opinion would be reſtored, and party connections in a great meaſure vaniſh; for the conſequence of coalitions, and parties formed on one ſide of the Houſe, was, that ſimilar engagements neceſſarily were formed on the other; and for his part, he wiſhed to ſee the time when he could come into the Houſe, and give his vote, diveſted of any ſentiments of attachment, which ſhould induce him to approve of meaſures from his connection with men. The objection made to this Bill, from its not making proviſion for the reduction of Treaſury Boroughs, did not by any means apply, as no perſon can tell but theſe Boroughs may be the firſt objects of the operation of the Bill: thoſe Boroughs had been long objects of jealouſy to him; and he declared that every merit this Bill poſſeſſed, in his opinion, would be much diminiſhed, were not the miniſterial Boroughs to be of that number which were likely to come firſt under theſe regulations. He urged the neceſſity of Reform from various motives. Foreigners had high conceptions of our Conſtitution; but what would any foreigner, who had been accuſtomed to admire it, imagine its ſituation to be, were he allowed to paſs the line of political ſpeculation, and dive beyond the ſurface, to view its ſecret intrigues and preſent corruptions? Would he pronounce it to be that mellowed, that meliorated ſyſtem, which the Noble Lord had repreſented it to be? He contended that the American war, though, perhaps, originally the war of the People, was finally that of the Miniſter, and had been ultimately carried on by that miſerable ſyſtem of corruption which was the ſource of all our misfortunes, and which called ſo loudly for immediate rectification. He was ſatisfied that the People had been diſguſted with the Conſtitution laſt year, rather than enamoured with it. The People were not a mob of undiſtinguiſhing beings, but an aſſemblage of diſcerning mortals, who were quick ſighted, and were not eaſily deceived.——They had obſerved the dangers to which they had been expoſed by the defects of the ſyſtem, and they wiſhed that all future riſk ſhould be totally

totally removed. They had not, however, loſt their veneration for the old fabric. But if thoſe beauties, if thoſe intrinſic excellencies, which they had been accuſtomed to admire, were deſtroyed; if the Conſtitution were allowed to be impaired by corruption, and to ſink into decay, they would ſoon ceaſe both to love and venerate it. He concluded with explaining the circumſtance of the Yorkſhire Petition, which he declared he would not have recommended, had he been conſulted, thinking it totally unneceſſary, from the application which had been before made to Parliament on the ſubject. The beſt proof that the opinion of the Nation at large was for a Reform, needed no other confirmation, than that no Petition had been preſented againſt it. Mr. Wilberforce approved of the Propoſitions highly; and ſaid, he thought his Right Honourable Friend deſerved more praiſe for having brought forward the motion, than for all the many ſervices he had before done his country.

Lord *Mulgrave* declared his hope that the motion would either be carried unanimouſly, or rejected, becauſe he thought if it were carried, and there appeared to be a conſiderable majority againſt it, it would lead to infinite miſchief. His Lordſhip ſaid, if the majority thought with him, they would reject it, as he ſaw great danger in countenancing any attempt to build up and erect a Conſtitution on ſpeculative Propoſitions. His Lordſhip declared he approved of the Propoſitions better in the ſhape in which they ſtood in the motion, than in any ſhape that they had before been brought forward. He praiſed Mr. Pitt's eloquence in his ſpeech, in the warmeſt terms; but entered an elaborate proteſt againſt any endeavours to new mould the Conſtitution.

Mr. *Ruſhworth* read an extract from Hume, relative to the extract from Lord Clarendon, mentioned by Mr. Pitt in his opening ſpeech, ſhewing that the alteration in the ſtate of the Repreſentation alluded to in 1656, was nothing more than an artful deſign of Cromwell's to get rid of his unpopularity, incurred by his deſpotiſm and tyranny. Mr. Ruſhworth appeared to be well verſed in Conſtitutional knowledge; and ſpoke on the ſide of Mr. Powys and Lord North.

Mr. *Iſaac Hawkins Browne* ſpoke very ſhrewdly and forcibly in ſupport of the motion. Mr. Brown alſo animadverted on the extract from Lord Clarendon, and reminded the Houſe of the maxim, that time was the great innovator, and that it required frequent changes adapted to the circumſtances of the times, as they preſented themſelves, to keep things as they were intended to be at firſt.

Mr. *Fox*, after the many occaſions on which he before expreſſed what his ſentiments were on the ſubject of a Reform in the Repreſentation, ſhould not conſider himſelf under any great neceſſity of troubling the Houſe, if there had not been extraordinary circumſtances attending the introduction of the preſent queſtion. That he had always been a friend to the principle of the Bill, was a fact which did not require to be now repeated. Whether the means taken to effect that principle were ſuch as were moſt unexceptionable, muſt remain for future diſcuſſion, but could not provoke his oppoſition

to

to the motion. There remained ample opportunities in the future ſtages of the Bill, to examine and correct it; opportunities which in themſelves would be the higheſt acquiſition. In the review which had been taken of the queſtion that night, there were means uſed to implicate the American war in the ſubject now under diſcuſſion, by ſuggeſting that it was ſupported by the influence of burgage tenures, and that if they had been withdrawn, that war would have had a more ſpeedy termination. He acknowledged that it would have been in the power of the Parliament to bring that war to a period, had they conſidered it as an improper one; but the manner in which it muſt have been done would be ſuch as he ſhould little expect to hear recommended from the Gentlemen on the other ſide of the Houſe. When the delay of a few days in paſſing the ſupplies was repreſented laſt year as the moſt heinous proceeding, what would have been the enormity of ſtopping, not the Ordnance Supply, as *was* the caſe, but all the other Supplies alſo, as *would* be the caſe in the event which might here take place. This would be a conduct worthy of a Parliament in certain ſituations, and would ſhew them to be ſenſible of their due weight and importance in the ſcale of the Conſtitution, and not the inſtruments of a ſuperior power, kept for no other purpoſe but to regiſter edicts, and perform an annual routine. Much had been ſaid of the merit of diſſolving that cohesion which was ſaid to ſubſiſt in the parties in that Houſe. That cohesion did ſubſiſt, was a truth in which he took too much pride, to think of denying, and from which this country derived too much advantage, to be an enemy to; his connections were formed on liberal and ſyſtematic principles, and could not be diſſolved by any regulations, while the ſame union in ſentiment and principles continued to cement them. When an Honourable Gentleman ſaid that parties on one ſide of the Houſe occaſioned ſimilar engagements on the other, he ſhould have conſidered that it equally applied to one as to the other; but there might be ſome circumſtances which might induce that Honourable Gentleman to look forward with eagerneſs to the diſſolution of ſuch attachments, if they obliged him to ſupport and defend meaſures in which his opinions did not correſpond; if they found him to act one way and think another.—Under ſuch circumſtances, it was perfectly natural that he ſhould pant to be diſengaged from ſuch connections, and reſign the load which ſeemed ſo much to oppreſs him. To that principle, which by a diminution of the Members for Boroughs, tended to increaſe the proportion of Repreſentatives for Counties, he was ſincerely and cordially a friend. But while he was thus explicit on the ſubject of his approbation, it was but juſt to mention, that there was another point to which he totally diſagreed; with all reſpect, which he always paid to a Houſe of Commons, and among the reſt, to the preſent Houſe, he could perceive in it no ſuperlative excellence, no juſt ſuperiority which could juſtify the ſuſpenſion of the operation of this Bill. To defer for a period of years any ſyſtem of Reform, however partial and inadequate, was by no means complying with the declared wiſhes of the majority of the Electors of this country, whoſe voice, though by no means to be acknowledged as that to which the

Houſe

Houſe of Commons muſt conform, when they were directed by any ſudden impulſe, as the opinions of a moment; ſhould always be obeyed on points which the experience and conſideration of years had taught them finally to decide on. The People, notwithſtanding all that had been ſaid, had no peculiar obligations to this Parliament, for uncommon inſtances of that propriety of conduct, which could warrant ſo implicit a reliance in it. No very flattering proofs of extraordinary attention to the Rights of the People had been given by his Majeſty's preſent Miniſters, in their ſupport of that excellent meaſure, the Weſtminſter Scrutiny; and no very ſplendid teſtimony of their prudence in financial concerns, could be drawn from the Commutation-tax.—This was a proceeding, the hardſhip of which they already felt, and there were ſome others now in agitation, which were not likely to turn out much more favourable. Theſe only were the reaſons the People could have for a reliance in the preſent Parliament. He did not however mean to ſay any thing which could be conſtrued into invective againſt them. He had before been accuſed of inſulting them. He did not know that he did ſo, but if heat ſhould have led him at any time to ſay any thing which could have that appearance, he was exceedingly ſorry for it. There was nothing in any of theſe circumſtances which could impreſs them on his memory; but he had obſerved, that nothing he ever ſaid in his warmeſt moments, had ever drawn forth ſo much paſſion and ill temper on the other ſide of the Houſe, as when he attempted to praiſe them. The Right Honourable Gentleman had in this inſtance receded from thoſe opinions, which on two former occaſions he ſeemed to maintain, and the alteration which he now made, for the purpoſe of a ſpecific plan, was infinitely for the worſe. It was in vain that he endeavoured to qualify the objections which the idea of innovation raiſed in the minds of ſome, by diminiſhing the extent and influence of Reformation—From the earlieſt periods of our Government, that principle of innovation, but which ſhould more properly be called amendment, was neither more nor leſs than the practice of the Conſtitution. In every ſpecies of Government, for he would put abſolute monarchy out of the queſtion, as one which ought never to take place in any country, democracy and ariſtocracy were always in a ſtate of gradual improvement, when experience came to the aid of theory and ſpeculation.—In all theſe, the voice of the People, when deliberately and generally collected, was invariably ſure to ſucceed.—There were moments of periodical impulſe and deluſion, in which they ſhould not be gratified; but when the views of a People had been formed and determined on the attainment of any object, they muſt ultimately ſucceed. On this ſubject the People of this country had petitioned from time to time, and their applications were made to their Parliament. For every reaſon therefore, they ſhould be gratified, leſt they may be inclined to ſue for redreſs in another quarter, where their application would have every probability of ſucceſs, from the experience of laſt year. Failing in their Repreſentatives, they might have recourſe to the Prerogative. It had been urged that now, while this buſineſs was in agitation, the People of Birmingham and Mancheſter had not

petitioned

petitioned to be repreſented. This was an argument which at this time, of all others, could have but little weight; for while they were alarmed for their trade, and their ſubſiſtence, it was no time for them to ſet about making improvements in that Conſtitution in which they were not certain how long they might have any ſhare. On the eve of emigration, they were to look for this in another country, to which their property and buſineſs were ſoon to be transferred. The different parts of this Plan would certainly, in a Committee, be ſubmitted to modification and amendment; but as it now ſtood, admitting only the firſt principle, every other part, and the means taken to attain the principle, were highly objectionable. He ſhould not heſitate to declare that he would never agree to admit the purchaſing from a *majority* of Electors the property of the whole. In this he ſaw ſo much injuſtice, and ſo much repugnance to the true ſpirit of our Conſtitution, that he could not entertain the idea for one moment. On the other hand, when the property of a Borough was in one man, there was no chance of his diſpoſing of it, on the terms this day mentioned. For when a particular ſum is laid down for a certain purchaſer, and intereſt ſuffered to accumulate on that ſum, the man muſt be a fool who could be in haſte to get the poſſeſſion of it. There was ſomething injurious in holding out pecuniary temptations to an Engliſhman to relinquiſh his franchiſe on the one hand, and a political principle which equally forbad it on another. He was uniformly of an opinion, which though not a popular one, he was ready to aver, that the right of governing was not property, but a truſt; and that whatever was given for Conſtitutional purpoſes, ſhould be reſumed, when thoſe purpoſes ſhould no longer be carried into effect. There were inſtances of gentlemen offering to ſacrifice the intereſt they may have in Boroughs, to the public good. It was ſtrange that none of them now came forward, when the occaſion has preſented itſelf. He was averſe to the idea of confining parliamentary ſituations to men of large fortunes, or thoſe who had diſtinguiſhed themſelves in public profeſſions. Should this be the caſe, there was ſcarcely any man ſo little acquainted with the Hiſtory of Parliament, as not to know, that the Houſe would loſe half its force.—It was not from men of large and eaſy fortunes, that attention, vigilance, energy and enterprize, were to be expected.—Human nature is too fond of gratification not to be ſomewhat attentive to it when the means are at hand; and the beſt and moſt meritorious public ſervices have always been performed by perſons in circumſtances removed from opulence. The Right Honourable Gentleman need not be aſhamed to take ſome of thoſe Regulations formed in the time of the Protector Oliver Cromwell.—For though a character too odious ever to be the object of praiſe or imitation, his inſtitutions, confirmed afterwards by his ſucceſſor Charles II. bear ſtrong marks of genius and ability; for his political diſpoſition was as good as that of his ſucceſſor, and his genius infinitely more powerful. He concluded with earneſtly entreating all ſides of the Houſe to concur in the queſtion now before them. He was ſorry the Honourable Gentleman who ſpoke before him did not in all the warmth he profeſſed

profeſſed on the occaſion, take the moſt conciliatory mode of acquiring ſtrength to it. Inſtead of reproaching the Noble Lord (North) for confining himſelf to old arguments and obſervations, he ſhould rather tremble for the ſucceſs with which theſe old obſervations had been applied by his Noble Friend, and the contrary fate which had before attended the novel and more variable ſtile of the Miniſter.

Mr. *Dundas* ſaid, he was ſorry that Gentlemen had introduced into the debate ſo much extraneous matter, as not only to divert the minds of the Houſe from the queſtion, but alſo tended to alienate the friends of the motion from one another. He was a friend to the Propoſitions of his Right Honourable Friend, and he begged that the Houſe would not conſider this as either a new or a ſtrange declaration; for to the neceſſity and propriety of an explicit Plan of Reform, he always was friendly; he had objected only to thoſe general and unexplained ſchemes under which the Houſe was to be converted into a project-ſhop—and they were to hold Committees of conſultation on the diſeaſes of the Conſtitution. Againſt ſuch dark ideas he had always ſet himſelf; but to the preſent plan, which was a ſingle and complete act, which went not only to an immediate, but to a conſtant Reform of the Repreſentation, which would not only cure the preſent, but the radical defects in the fabric of Repreſentation, he was inclined to give his moſt hearty ſupport; and he repeated his declaration, that he was ſorry that any thing had been introduced into the debate ſo totally abſtracted from the buſineſs as the queſtion of the American war. The American war was the war of the People; and on that occaſion it was not the conſtruction of the Parliament which gave it riſe, but the general feeling of the People, and which was declared through their Repreſentatives. It was not the Noble Lord in the blue ribband who was the author of that war; he did no more than execute the ideas of the People; and in his mind, if he was blameable in any thing, it was for executing thoſe ideas with leſs ardour than they were expreſſed.

He ſaid the preſent Propoſitions were free from all the objections which had lain againſt the former Plans. The ſacred inheritance of property was not to be violated, and men were not to be outraged by peremptory conditions. No man or ſet of men were to be forced to enter into the ſcheme, unleſs they approved of the conditions; and yet ſuch were the conditions, that he had no doubt but they would be ſoon accepted.

Mr. *Burke*, after entertaining the Houſe for a conſiderable time on the Honourable Gentleman (Mr. Dundas's) converſion from the principles of anti-reformation, proceeded to diſcuſs the merits of the preſent queſtion, as well as the manner of bringing it in. It offered one alternative, either to adopt this limited, confined plan of Reform, or be perhaps liable to receive one from the Duke of Richmond, on a more enlarged ſcale. Between the Miniſter and the

Houſe of Commons, there was the ſame ſpecies of conduct, as if a robber ſhould enter the houſe of a man, and ſay, Let me take away ſuch things as I pleaſe, and I will lock the door, and keep out any other thieves; but if you refuſe the offer, then take your chance of loſing all. The doctrine which had gained ſo much ground, and in conformity to which this plan had now been introduced, was that of Univerſal Repreſentation. But this meaſure was only an illuſion, from which no ſolid benefit would ever reſult. The influence of the country gentlemen in Parliament was always known to preponderate, when they were united in opinion. The reſpectability which attended a man of landed property, called him for the moſt part into the ſituation, which was in itſelf diſagreeable, and rather a ſituation of duty and conſtraint than an object of ambition. Theſe circumſtances added ſo much to the importance of their Members, that the advocates of every meaſure were glad to boaſt of them as their ſupporters. Where then was the prudence of throwing into that ſcale, in whoſe power the balance already was, that ſhare of power which was pretended to be the means of keeping all parts of the Houſe on the ſame level? He took a very extenſive view of the preſent ſtate of Repreſentation; and aſked if the proprietors of Boroughs had not been already ſufficiently paid in the profuſion of the honours of this country, without now opening the purſe of the nation.

Lord *Frederick Campbell* delivered an eulogy on the Chancellor of the Exchequer, but declared he could by no means conſent to countenance any alteration of the Conſtitution. The door once opened for innovation and experiment, the wiſeſt among them could not ſay where it would end. His Lordſhip ſaid, that while we had the happineſs to enjoy an Adminiſtration of ſuch virtue and integrity as the preſent, he hardly could perceive the neceſſity of any reform.

Mr. *Rolle* was alſo deciſively againſt the motion. If it was ſuffered to paſs that Houſe, there was no ſecurity for its being thrown out in the other Houſe; for how could he tell but a new Lord, or a new ſet, might be made on purpoſe to carry it, if it went up there? There were, Mr. Rolle ſaid, ſome perſons ſitting in a certain place, who had no more right to ſit in that Houſe than his groom.

The *Attorney General* very ably ſupported the motion, entering into a recapitulation of ſeveral of Mr. Pitt's arguments, and anſwering ſeveral things that had been ſaid on the other ſide the queſtion. Mr. Attorney, in the courſe of his ſpeech, ſaid, there might be perſons impudent and indecent enough to declare, that he had no more right to ſit in that Houſe than their groom.

Mr. *Bankes* paid very high compliments to his Right Honourable Friend; but ſaid, he could not accede to the motion. Had it been a motion for a Committee, he would have voted for it, as he had regularly voted for the other queſtions. Mr. Bankes by no means approved of purchaſing the Boroughs with the public money.

The

The *Chancellor of the Exchequer* closed the debate in a few words, in reply to what had fallen from Mr. Bankes, as Mr. Bankes's objection had been singly started. Mr. Pitt dwelt considerably on the mortification he felt at having the misfortune of any thing which he proposed being disapproved by one, for whose character, independent of the claims of a long and intimate friendship, he had so high and just a veneration. He named the points in his proposed Bill, in which it was unexceptionable; and he also mentioned those which he thought could be altered, without changing the spirit of the measure. The House having, long before that, expressed a strong desire to see the debate concluded, Mr. Pitt touched but slightly on several particulars, which he affirmed to be deserving of the most attentive consideration.

At about a Quarter before FOUR in the Morning, the House divided on the question,

Ayes (for bringing in the Bill,) - -	174
Noes (against it) - - -	248
Majority against the Reform -	74

Tellers for the Ayes, the Hon. John Eliot, and Robert Smith, Esq.

Tellers for the Noes, the Right Honourable William Eden, and the Honourable G. A. North.

FINIS.

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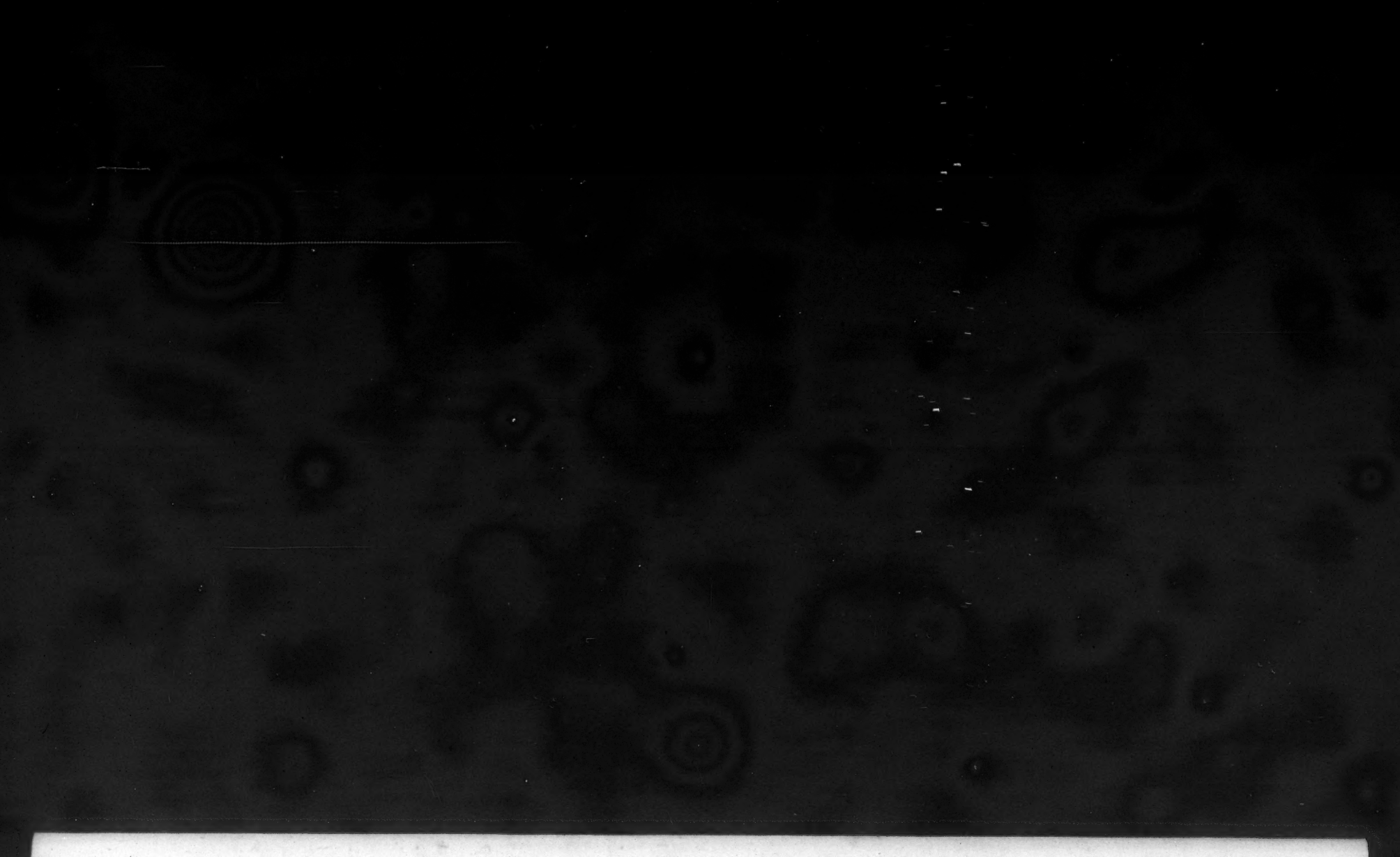
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